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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by the Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[15 April 1998]

GE.98-12668 (E)

1. The Anglican Consultative Council, through the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations, representing 70 million persons in 165 different countries around the world is pleased to share its thoughts before the esteemed delegates and representatives of this fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

2. The Anglican United Nations Office wishes to share its deep concern about the continued political crisis in East Timor. Reports from a number of sources still indicate a high level of tension within the region. Of particular concern is the continued pattern of human rights abuses against the people of East Timor by Indonesian military forces. Part of the reason for the escalation in human rights abuses appears to be due to the reluctance of the Government of Indonesia to prevent its armed forces from committing unlawful abuses. Clearly there is much to be done by Indonesia's military forces in abiding by international humanitarian standards which seek to protect innocent civilians, non-combatants, and those taken prisoner during conditions of armed conflict.

3. The problem which continues to persist in the region is exacerbated by the dominance of weapons, small arms, and continuous re-supply of military hardware. Amnesty International, in a June 1997 report, brought to light the fact that the sale of arms and transfers of military equipment continue to undermine human rights in Indonesia and East Timor.

4. As a community of faith concerned about the sanctity of life and affirming the dignity of every human being, we are quite distressed to learn about the efforts of various Governments to sell or to transfer various kinds of military and security equipment to the Indonesian military forces. These weapons have been misused for the purpose of intimidating peaceful demonstrations or others engaged in non-violent civil protests against the Government.

5. Amnesty reports indicated that submachine guns, supplied in 1995 by a European country, were used by Indonesian security forces. Assault rifles, under a licence from another country in Europe, were made in Indonesia and used by security forces. There have been reports of foreign companies based in Europe providing firearms, marksmanship and counter-insurgency training to the Indonesian military. The sale of armoured personnel carriers and water canons with chemical dye, sales of armoured patrol vehicles fitted with machine guns, and the sale of other military equipment by other countries have undermined opportunities for peace in the region.

6. If progress towards a peaceful settlement is to be achieved, then an international ban on weapons sales to the Indonesian military forces is clearly necessary. We therefore urge the Commission to press its member Governments to desist from the sale of weapons to combatant forces in Indonesia.

7. It is indeed disturbing to learn that despite the creation of a National Commission on Human Rights, certain police and military units continue to tolerate acts of violence, random murder and torture against the civilian population. Clearly, in the interest of justice and fundamental

human rights, the Government of Indonesia must make stronger efforts to ensure that such practices do not continue. In this context, we urge the Commission to urge the Government of Indonesia to:

(a) Respect and defend the rights of those who may choose to express dissenting opinions through peaceful means;

(b) Support the creation of a civilian police force consistent with the recommendation of the United Nations Special Rapporteur in his November 1994 report;

(c) Closely monitor the conduct of its police and military forces and assume responsibility for ensuring that civilians are not subjected to human rights violations, torture, summary arrest or acts of murder; the military and police forces are also to refrain from torturing prisoners and engaging in other forms of ill-treatment;

(d) Develop an independent, fair and transparent judiciary in East Timor that will hold trials and dispense justice in strict conformity with international standards of fairness;

(e) Provide access to independent international human rights monitors.

8. The interests of justice and the defence of fundamental human rights require that Governments take an active role in protecting civil liberties and fundamental human freedoms. Clearly, the continuing violence in East Timor reveals how much progress still needs to be made by the Government of Indonesia. At the same time, meaningful efforts to ensure peace in East Timor can only occur if the international community cooperates to make this possible. The sale of arms and security equipment to the Government's military and security forces clearly counteracts efforts to bring about lasting peace in the region. Such activities need to cease in the interests of peace and regional security.